

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2013 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: WINGS for kids

Application ID: 13ND145424

Program Name: WINGS for kids AmeriCorps Program

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

(+) The applicant provides documentation of the severity of the needs in the targeted community: all elementary schools feed into a system of high schools with high rate of drop outs, on time graduation rate under 50%, below the national average rate of 75%; and more than 95% of enrolled students are from economically disadvantaged families living at or below the 185% the federal level of poverty. The applicant also provides analysis on the disparity of cognitive development between the highest and the lowest socioeconomic groups.

(+) The applicant explains why the targeted population was selected as an effective means to address high school dropout problem: students in elementary schools in the targeted area are already lagging behind their upper middle and high school counterparts in academic and social behavior, and intervention at this level will improve long-term outcomes and higher high school graduation rate.

(+) The applicant is requesting 92 AmeriCorps members for a total of 40.21 Member Service Years. The Members include: seven full-time, seven one-year half time, and 78 reduced half-time Members. The proposed numbers of Members and type of slots appears to be appropriate for the scope of the project.

(+) The applicant provides a sufficient description of AmeriCorps member activities, roles and/or responsibilities in a clear manner by stating the following: the applicant states 92 AmeriCorps members will leverage an additional 120 volunteers to serve 840 economically disadvantaged students and Members will implement the WINGS social and emotional learning curriculum directly with the students and provide additional support to parents and family members.

(+) The applicant describes what AmeriCorps members will do: full-time Members will assume leadership, coaching and program logistics within WINGS; half-time Members will serve in specific behavior management, help coaching the reduced half-time Members; and reduced half-time Members will assume leadership with small group students to implement the social and emotional learning curriculum activities, and facilitate small group discussions sessions.

(+) The applicant reports research conducted by Borghans, Heckman, Duckworth, and ter Weel (2008) and Cunha

and Heckman (2007) that suggest the social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum leads to increased graduation rates. This is important because it links the SEL curriculum to graduation rates which is the foundation of the academic support.

(+) The applicant describes how the WINGS program has gone through external evaluations by researchers from the University of Virginia and Yale University to document measurable community impact. The evaluations reported that students enrolled in the program demonstrated higher math, reading and other scores when compared to non-WINGS students. This is important because it establishes external validity of the program and provides evidence-based measurable outcomes.

(+) The applicant states that grades will be improved with positive high school graduation rates, school attendance, and better behavior; school attachment will be enhanced.

(+) The applicant indicated they will use their Efforts to Outcomes tracking tool to document student progress. The tool will help the applicant document and report program Performance Measurements and Outcomes.

(+) The applicant describes how the impact will be reported: weekly and quarterly rating of specific skills, weekly and quarterly classroom teachers' behavior assessments, and school attendance on report cards, annual report and partnerships reports.

(-) The applicant does not make a clear correlation between the national average achievement rates and the local achievement rates of preschoolers in Charleston and Fulton to determine the severity of the problem that exists in the targeted counties.

(-) The applicant does not present recent and relevant data to add a description of the specific elementary schools problems, shown as classroom behaviors, school attendance and academic achievement.

(-) The applicant describes that AmeriCorps members allow the WINGS staff more flexibility to provide their services and does not specifically identify what services would be eliminated if the grant was not funded.

(-) The applicant explains the assignment of seven full-time Members to assist in the enrollment of students. This does not appear to be an activity directly linked to the identified need.